

# Planning a Green Event



*Throughout the year, people host countless dinner parties, church picnics, school council meetings, children's birthday parties, backyard barbecues, family reunions, and holiday celebrations that can leave significant carbon footprints on the environment. Why not introduce a green theme at your next event?*

## RESOURCES

[www.botanicalpaperworks.com](http://www.botanicalpaperworks.com)

[www.treehugger.com](http://www.treehugger.com)

[www.greenyour.com](http://www.greenyour.com)

[www.gogreenproductshop.com](http://www.gogreenproductshop.com)

[www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com)

[www.globalwarmingdiet.org](http://www.globalwarmingdiet.org)

[www.notesonaparty.com](http://www.notesonaparty.com)

*"Nobody can do everything, but everyone can do something."*

Taking even a few of these actions will help you plan an eco-friendly event that you, your guests, and our planet will appreciate.

## BEFORE THE EVENT

- Consider using paperless strategies to provide event details to guests. Information could be distributed through e-mail, the organization or event website, or by circulating an online newsletter.
- You could also invite guests online through a free service such as [evite.com](http://evite.com). If you prefer paper invitations, print on recycled paper or paper derived from sustainable resources such as bamboo, using soy or vegetable ink. A creative and eco-friendly alternative to traditional paper invitations are seeded invitations, which can be planted.
- Planning the entertainment for the event in advance will help you save time and money. For example, use your mp3 player, iPod, computer, etc. to play music rather than hiring a DJ, which will avoid fees and environmental impacts associated with transporting the DJ's heavy equipment.

## LOCATION

Consider the distance your guests must travel to get to the event and host the festivities at a convenient location. Encourage guests to carpool, bike, walk, or take public transportation on the invitation or by offering prizes. If weather permits, take your meeting or party outside to take advantage of natural light, thereby using less electricity.

## PARTY FAVOURS

- For children's birthday parties, revamp the traditional "loot bag" – replace plastic toys that have a brief shelf life with functional, natural favours like finger paint derived from vegetable dyes, organic chocolates, organic or homemade playdough, or soybean crayons.
- For adult soirees, send guests home with leftover food, centrepieces, and other environmentally-friendly giveaways like organic seed packets, locally produced honey, soy-based candles, or items from local artisans.

[www.ecosuperior.org](http://www.ecosuperior.org)

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## DECOR

- Allow your creativity to shine when it comes to decorating. Cover your tables with washable linen tablecloths and napkins you already own, or purchase those made from sustainable resources, such as bamboo or organic cotton. If your event is outside, skip the plastic covering and use a printed bedsheet as a unique way to cover picnic tables.

- Create a focal point on the table and give your party a vintage feel by using centrepieces such as tea tins purchased at yard sales or flea markets. Fill your centrepieces with local or organic cut flowers, potted flowers, fresh fruit, living herbs, or baby trees and encourage your guests to take them home as party favours. If your creative juices are flowing, look to your yard for inspiration and gather branches, grasses, flowers, or rocks and arrange them in centrepieces.

- Avoid using balloons when decorating as they are not made from biodegradable materials and they can be harmful to wildlife if they escape outdoors.

- Opt for reusable decorations – skip paper streamers and go for cloth ribbons. Avoid writing dates and use generic decorations that can be used again at future events.

- If you want to infuse your party with a festive fragrance, avoid using air fresheners with a lot of chemicals, and try out a natural blend. For example, boil apple or orange peels with spices during autumn get-togethers.

## MEETING MATERIALS

There are measures that community groups can take to reduce the environmental impacts of even small meetings. For example, consider using dry-erase markers and white boards at meetings rather than flip charts. If flipcharts are used, ensure the paper contains a high amount of recycled material. Or, show documents on an overhead projector rather than printing individual handouts. If printed handouts are necessary, try to print on post-consumer recycled paper. Using narrower margins and smaller fonts will also minimize photocopying. Reuse handouts whenever possible, such as prayer or hymn cards at future services.

## FOOD & BEVERAGE

- Ditch the disposables. Invest in a set of washable plates, bowls, glasses, mugs, cutlery, serving dishes, and punch bowls that can be reused at future events.

- Opt for vegetarian menu options or cut back the amount of meat dishes. Stick to in-season, organic, and locally-grown ingredients.

- Serving bulk snack items, such as cheese, fruit, vegetables, etc. can significantly reduce packaging waste. Also, condiments such as cream, sugar, ketchup, mustard, butter, etc. can be supplied in bulk serving containers rather than individual packages.

- Encourage your guests to bring Tupperware containers to the party or meeting and have them bring home leftover food. Or, donate untouched food to a local shelter or food bank.

- If you plan to serve beer or wine, strive to include organic or locally produced options. Also, be sure to serve fair trade coffee, or try beet coffee, which is derived entirely from locally grown beets. You can also try your hand at making your own sangria.

## CLEAN UP

- Your greening efforts don't have to end when the event does. For instance, be sure to use environmentally-friendly products to clean meeting or gathering spaces. Replace your regular paper products (ie. Facial tissues, toilet tissue, paper towels, paper napkins), and equip your pantry or closet with those that are chlorine-free and made from post-consumer recycled paper.

- When the event ends, be sure you have garbage, recycling, and composting bins placed together and clearly marked for guests to dispose of waste accordingly.

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